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Trade/Foreign Affairs : African Ambassadors Target Houston For Continent's First Joint Trade and investment mission to U.S. 2/9/1989

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AFRICAN AMBASSADORS TARGET HOUSTON FOR CONTINENT'S
FIRST JOINT TRADE AND INVESTMENT MISSION TO U.S.

Washington, D.C. (February 9, 1989) -- The first multi-country African trade and investment mission to the U.S. is targeting Houston for its initial effort. Representing a regional market of 350 million people, the U.S. ambassadors of nine West and Central African nations will be in Houston from Monday, February 20 through Sunday, February 26.

The Houston trip represents the first such African cooperative endeavor. The nine countries involved share a common currency and investment codes favorable to U.S. investors. With plentiful natural resources ranging from diamonds and gold to phosphates, petroleum and uranium, the nine ambassadors will be encouraging Houston-area companies to join the list of U.S. corporations already active in their region.

The ambassadors will hold a press conference on Tuesday, February 21, 9:30 a.m. - 10:00 a.m., in the Bridgeport Room (second floor), the Four Seasons Hotel, 1300 Lamar Street. At that time, they will discuss the purpose and goals of their visit, and will be available to answer questions from the media. A second press conference will be held at the conclusion of their Houston visit, on Friday, February 24, 3:30 p.m. - 4:00 p.m., at the African American Heritage Museum, 2101 Crawford St. (corner of Gray and Crawford Streets), Suite 111A. During this second event, the group will announce the results of the Houston mission, and again be available for questions.

The ambassadors will host a reception on Tuesday, February 21, 6:30 p.m. -

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8:30 p.m., at the Magnolia Ballroom at 715 Franklin Street. The press are invited.

Between these two events, the ambassadors will be meeting with various executives including representatives of the Greater Houston Chamber of Commerce, the Houston World Trade Association, Conoco, M.W. Kellogg, and Riviana Foods. The group will be visiting Prairie View A & M's goat processing project, and meetings are scheduled at Texas Southern University and the University of Houston to discuss educational exchange programs. Potential joint venture opportunities between the African nations and minority and women-owned businesses will be the topic of meetings with executives of the Houston Business Council. In addition, the group will tour the Port of Houston, meet with Mayor Kathryn J. Whitmire and Congressman Mickey Leland, participate in the second anniversary celebration of the African Chamber of Commerce, and play an honorary active role in the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. Scheduling information on these events and their availability to the media can be obtained by calling the contact names listed at the end of this release.

In addition, the ambassadors want to meet with individual Houston business representatives interested in trade and/or investment with their countries. Companies interested in such one-on-one business meetings with particular ambassadors should notify the Houston International Protocol Alliance at (713) 951-0544.

While the Houston visit is a first-of-its-kind mission by the ambassadors, the countries they represent are no strangers to U.S. investors. A partial list of U.S. corporations operating in West and Central Africa includes Mobil Oil, Texaco, Wang Laboratories, Caterpillar Tractor, Ford Motor Company, General Electric, Xerox Corporation, Seagrams Distillers, Hertz and Arthur Anderson.

These nine nations, with a total population of fifty million, share a number of conditions which have encouraged such extensive U.S. investment. These

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include: favorable investment codes which provide tax holidays for entering businesses and allow complete repatriation of profits; regional political stability; excellent U.S. relations; and a commonly-shared easily convertible currency (the CFA, which is pegged to the French franc). In addition, each of the nine nations is a member of its respective regional economic community: ECOWAS, CEAO (both West African), or UDEAC (Central Africa).

The ambassadors will be focusing their efforts on encouraging bilateral trade, along with investment in the following arenas: mining, aquaculture, livestock, agricultural products processing, tourism development, and water resource management. In addition, a wide variety of infrastructure and development projects are available.

The visiting African mission includes the following individuals: H.E. Theophile Nata, Ambassador of Benin; H.E. Paul Desire Kabore, Ambassador of Burkino Faso; H.E. Mahamat Ali Adoum, Ambassador of Chad; H.E. Christian Lingama Toleque, Ambassador of the Central African Republic; H.E. Benjamin Bounkoulou, Ambassador of Congo; H.E. Nouhoum Samassekou, Ambassador of Mali; H.E. Moumouni Adamou Djermakoye, Ambassador of Niger; H.E. Ibra Deguene Ka, Ambassador of Senegal; and H.E. Ellom-Kodjo Schuppius, Ambassador of Togo.

Interview opportunities are available with the ambassadors, all of whom speak excellent English. Prior to February 21, to schedule interviews, or receive information on itinerary details, contact Marc Apter, Suzanne Currie or Rick Stack at (202) 265-1212. From February 21-26, contact Marc Apter at (713) 951-0544.

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